



MRS.
HARRY
PAYNE
WHITNEY



MRS.
ALMERIC
HUGH
PAGET.



MRS.
EGERTON
L.
WINTHROP
JR.

MATRIARCHS IN SPLENDOR.

Their First Assembly Ball at the Astoria a Scene of Dazzling Magnificence.

MRS. ASTOR RECEIVES THE GUESTS.

Standing Over the Soil of Her Old Home, She Bids Society Welcome to the Palace Named After Her Family.

For more than one reason was the assembly given last night at the Astoria one of the most notable events in the history of New York society during recent years. It was made so, in the first place, by the demise last year of the renowned Matriarchs, full of years and honors. That lamented occurrence left the Assembly—flippantly termed the "Matriarchs"—in undisputed possession of the title of being the—and the "the"—most emphasized too strongly—representative and comprehensive dance acknowledged by the "upper crust" of this city.

This consideration was uppermost in the fragmentary conversation of the belles, beaux, matrons, dowagers and debutantes who alighted from their broughams at the extreme western entrance of the Astoria Hotel last night and hurried into the building, followed by the greedy eyes of a hundred or more sightseers. But there were still other points of view, which were canvassed with animation while the women were shedding their wraps of fur and feathers and readjusting the delicacies of toilet and the set of jewels before emerging from the seclusion of the cloak room. It was the opening of the season of '97-'98, for example, and from the success of the Assembly, those who were superstitious among them would draw an augury for the success of the social season. Then, again, it was the first formal and really big celebration given in the new hotel that had been paid for with the millions of the Astors.

Concession to Youth. Conversation, too, flitted to those who were going to "receive," and it was discovered that, whereas it had long been the custom of the "Matriarchs" to assign a young matron or two to assist the dowager who posed as the hostess of the evening, never before had such extremely young matrons as Mrs. Henry Payne Whitney and Mrs. Egerton L. Winthrop, Jr., been called upon to act in this capacity. This innovation was interpreted as a gracious concession to the younger element in society, and a happy omen for the vivacity of Assemblies in the future.

And so the guests found their way to the ball room, where a diffused blaze of light was flashed back from the polished floor. The vivid coloring of the figure paintings on the wall and ceiling formed a background that rivalled the chromatic splendors of the women's gowns, and such criticisms as were murmured behind fans were color in the decorations should permit less than justice to be done to toilets that would be resplendent against a duller background.

Mrs. Astor received the guests, assisted by Mrs. James A. Burden and the two youthful matrons already mentioned. And as the revellers paid their respects to the "first lady" at the ball they were struck with another significant feature of the occasion. That was the striking sentimental appropriateness of the veteran society leader standing over familiar soil, although under a new roof, receiving the homage that for a generation she had received in the

old red house that stood at the corner of Thirty-fourth street and Fifth avenue, long before the Astors ever thought of building hotels. And Mrs. Astor seemed to appreciate the significance of it, for she smiled at the words of such old friends as ventured to remind her of the coincidence.

Splendid Debutantes. Very stately and very handsomely dressed was this old lady, whose dominating influence for years has been a result of her social genius as much as of her wealth. Her jewels were of the finest to be seen in the ballroom. Her lieutenants were no less splendid. Mrs. James A. Burden was in white. Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney looked as winsome and girlish as when she was Miss Gertrude Vanderbilt, and Mrs. Egerton L. Winthrop, Jr., was declared to look not a day older than the Emeline Heckscher, whose father was esteemed the best par excellence of New York society in the last generation.

For a short time the receiving matrons stood in the corridor leading from the circular red statuary room to the grand stairway. Only there was nothing about it to suggest a corridor. Small had embowered it with exotics, so that one might have imagined it a bower in some tropical Isle. The florist had exercised similar profusion and taste with the remainder of the space held sacred to the Assembly guests. After bowing to Mrs. Astor and her lieutenants they passed back to the statuary room, of which the matron was backed high with American Beauty roses and farfetched ferns. The ceiling was garlanded with white and pink roses, which also occurred in clusters on the asparagus vines that hung in feathery festoons from the encircling balcony.

Passing thence to the ballroom, one perceived that the floral decoration had been managed with artistic restraint, whereby an effect of coolness and coziness was achieved without obscuring the elaborate scheme of decoration for which the room has won renown. The upper tier of boxes, shut off from the guests, were filled with drooping palms, from which depended a profusion of delicate Southern vines.

In Fairy Caves. The two great wall niches had been treated in the same way, and the musicians' stand in the western end of the upper tier was screened off with vines and Oriental foliage.

Very restful were these fairy caves of green to eyes fatigued by the glitter of floor and ceiling, of lamps and jewels and the sheen of satin and silk in divers colors. New York never saw a ballroom more gayly, more dazzlingly peopled. Never was there so rich a feast for the eye that loves to dwell on precious stones. Rubies, sapphires, emeralds and diamonds of an aggregate value that would be startlingly estimated, vied with each other to fascinate and bewilder the onlooker.

The matrons wore broades, satins and silks, embellished with jeweled embroidery, tinsel, pusementerie, point lace, artificial flowers, tulle and sable. Gems circulated not alone on their heads, in their necks and wrists and in their bosoms, but all over their elaborate gowns, in unexpected places, shining out of the folds like fireflies against the background of the night.

For variety and wealth of ornament, indeed, the occasion was remarkable. It was an index of fashion in this as in other respects. Ornamentation the most prodigal abounded. It manifested itself in tiaras, necklaces, bracelets, pendants, ear studs and such corsage adjuncts as fringes, crescents, sunbursts, stars, butterflies, empire bows encrusted with jewels, and a hundred other devices.

Nor were the matrons alone in claiming this privilege. Unmarried women of a

couple of seasons' standing were scarcely less resplendent. It was left for the debutantes to shine in sweet simplicity unadorned.

Pink Buds. And even the "buds" had ventured on a decorative advance. True, it was a harmless little innovation, but it was none the less worthy of remark. Instead of the pure white which alone is sanctioned by tradition as the attire for a girl who is making her first bow in society, many of last night's debutantes wore pink. Let the names of some of these courageous damsels be recorded.

Miss Grinnell was voted the wearer of the "smartest" of the debutante gowns, whether radical or conservative. It was a creation in Pompadour pink, just over from Paris, and it constituted a most ravishing contrast to Miss Grinnell's golden blonde complexion. The material was heavy silk, and the front was embroidered with rhinestones, turquoises and silver spangles.

Miss Beatrice de Coppet wore a pretty rose-colored gown. It was of satin, and frilled with chiffon.

Miss Eleanor Fitzgerald, who only made her debut on Tuesday, wore a lovely soft pink satin with frillings of lace and pearl ornaments.

Miss Janet Henderson was in white, a superb French gown, embroidered in gold. Miss Frances Pell wore pink satin, with rufflings of mousseline de soie.

Of the more conservative younger sisters, Miss Isabelle Cameron was one of the most notable. She wore white, although she occupied the anomalous position of being a debutante and yet not a debutante. This paradox is explained by the fact that she was presented at court last Summer, but had never been in society in New York until last night. The gown she wore was that in which she was presented to the Queen.

Miss Maude Deland was in white silk trimmed with chiffon, lace and pink roses.

Many Debutantes. Miss De Kay was in white point d'esprit over pale blue.

Miss Josephine Drexel and Miss Christine Biddle were among the debutantes who were not at the ball. Some of the others present, all either in white or rose, silk or satin, with chiffon lace and pearls, were Miss Marie Bowers, Miss Charlotte Post, Miss Helen Van Cortlandt Morris, Miss Martha D. Bowers, Miss Florence Coppell, Miss Eleanor Thomas, Miss Cornelia Livingston Clarkson, Miss Ruth Hoe, Miss Elsie Baker, Miss Amy Brown, Miss Cassie Dodge, Miss Gertrude Alexander and Miss Pell.

Dancing began as soon after the gracious opening formalities as seemed decent, and was kept up vivaciously until supper was announced. The floor was pronounced perfect and the music, by Naham Franko's Festival Orchestra, simply entrancing.

It was at midnight that the guests trooped into the Astor Gallery to refresh themselves for the more serious business of the cotillon and all that was to follow before dawn. The Reception Committee of five ladies, with their escorts, sat at a central table and the rest of the merry-makers distributed themselves indifferently among smaller tables set for from four to half a dozen.

The number of those who sat down to supper was 450—nearly a hundred, it will be perceived. In excess of the limit placed by the late Ward McAllister on those who should be considered in the social swim.

The decorations of the Astor Gallery are in delicate tints, and this idea was faithfully adhered to in the distribution



CORNER
OF THE
ASTORIA
BALL ROOM

of flowers. Only pale pink roses and carnations were used to trim the tables.

This was the menu:

December 10th, 1897.			
The First Assembly Ball.			
Chaud.			
Consomme de Volaille.			
Terrapin, Philadelphie.			
Canard Canvas Back.			
Froid.			
Aspic de foie gras.			
Macaronnade de Volaille.			
Chaud-froid de Cailles.			
Sandwiches et Rillettes.			
Glaces de Fruits.			
Petits fours.			
Fruits.			
Bonbons.			
Cafe.			
Moet et Chandon.			
Brut Imperial.			

Distinguished Strangers.

Many strangers were noticeable seated at the tables in the Astor Gallery.

Among these was Miss Fanny Reed, of Paris, sister of the late Mrs. Paron Stevens, who spent the Summer at Newport. Miss Port, Frederic Trombull, Stewart M. Fairle, Mr. and Mrs. Millet, Hon. and Mrs. Lytleton, Miss Lytleton and Ingram Whitaker were all English visitors. So was Mr. McDonnell, a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Whitney.

Others were Amos Lawrence, of Boston; A. Hone, of Brooklyn; Miss Michell, of Philadelphia; Mr. and Mrs. Warren Wilbur, of Bethlehem, Pa.; Ensign Yates Stirling, of Baltimore; Mr. and Mrs. Francesco Terry, of Paris; A. Grip, the Swedish Minister, and Baron von Overbeck.

Francis McNutt, who has been until recently for years in the diplomatic service of the United States abroad, supped at a secluded little table with his fiancée, Miss Margaret V. C. Ogden.

When they returned to the ballroom at

1 o'clock the dancers found that during their absence the floor had been hemmed in with two rows of gilded and tapestried chairs in readiness for the cotillon.

And here occurred another indication of the changing of the old order. Or, rather, it was really not an indication of anything except that Elisha Dyer, Jr., had been sincere in his declaration that he would never lend another cotillon—that he was tired out.

Alexander M. Hadden had been selected to succeed Mr. Dyer. No blushing novice is Mr. Hadden. He has been cotillon leader of distinction for many years, but has sometimes been looked upon with mild disfavor by what is known as the "smart set," because his interpretation of what constituted the bounds of society was too white to suit them—because Mr. Hadden sometimes led cotillions in the houses of people who were not altogether recognized as undoubted members of the "Four Hundred."

Leading No Joke.

Whether Mr. Hadden has made his peace with these cavillers or whether they have broadened their ideas sufficiently to see his actions in a new light, it merely remains to be told that he covered himself with distinction last night. He outdid his trying part—for leading cotillions is no joke—with dignity and discretion and infinite good temper, and at the same time with vivacity and originality. And what most of the dancers asked themselves, could be expected of a cotillon leader?

Mr. Hadden's partner was Mrs. Almeric Hugh Paget, who was stunningly handsome in a pale blue chiffon gown, made over satin and smothered with old point de Venise lace, as fine as festoons of cobwebs. Strands of wonderful pearls lent the final touch to the Titania-like effect of her costume.

The favors distributed included fancy baskets, filled with artificial roses and spring flowers and large fans trimmed with flowers and ribbons.

Glance at the Gowns.

And now for something about the gowns. Among the handsomest noticed in the ball room was one worn by Mrs. Luther Kountze, of rose satin and brocade.

Mrs. William C. Whitney looked charming in one of the most French looking costumes at the ball. It was of pale blue satin, trimmed with clouds of tulle of the same hue, caught with trails and clusters of bluish roses. Mrs. Whitney's tiara, necklace, pendant, bracelets and corsage ornaments were all of large supplies, set with diamonds.

Lady Colebrooke, Mrs. Whitney's guest, who accompanied her to the ball, wore a plain satin gown, trimmed with duchess lace and sprays of pink roses. Her ornaments were pearls.

Miss Eulitt Kernochan wore a rose satin gown fluffed with chiffon.



MISS
CAROLINE
M.
PHELPS
STOKES.



MISS
LEILA
SLOANE

Matriarch Leaders and Distinguished Debutantes.